Eurogroup

Brussels, 30 November 2018
ecfin.cef.cpe(2018)6522909

Work programme for the Eurogroup for the first half of 2019

I. Policy priorities

As stipulated in the Eurogroup working methods, a work programme for the Eurogroup for the following six months has been drawn up. The work programme would help us to ensure an optimal preparation of issues for discussion. In developing the work programme of the Eurogroup, the Council Recommendations on the economic policies of the euro area have been duly taken into account.

While growth peaked in 2017, the strength of the euro area's domestic growth drivers should be sufficient to allow activity to continue growing and unemployment to continue falling. The improving labour market should help to sustain consumption next year and investment should enjoy the continued support of still favourable financing conditions. The outlook, however, is clouded by the presence of a number of interrelated downside risks, arising from within the euro area and also with respect to economic and trade tensions. Core inflation has been rather muted so far, despite some pick up in wage growth, but it is expected to increase gradually.

In this context, it is important that the Eurogroup maintains its focus on structural reforms that will allow the euro area to strengthen its economic growth, reduce its vulnerability to future economic shocks and to be better prepared to absorb them. In this regard, the Eurogroup will promote the sharing of views and enhance common understandings of the structural challenges ahead. It will also continue to invite distinguished external participants that contribute to more enriching discussions, under the thematic discussions framework. Considering the value of more narrowly targeting discussions held at the Eurogroup, discussions in preparatory committees shall be broader in scope.

The euro area’s public finances continue to face challenges that need to be addressed, in particular the high levels of public debt. The Eurogroup will continue to closely examine Member States' efforts to ensure sound fiscal policies, as well as the budgetary situation in the euro area as a whole. Moreover, the implementation of any excessive deficit procedure (EDP) recommendations to euro area Member States will continue to be closely monitored.

The Eurogroup will continue to be involved in post-programme surveillance in Cyprus, Ireland, Portugal and Spain. Following the end of the ESM programme for Greece in August 2018, the Eurogroup will periodically discuss the Commission’s enhanced surveillance reports on Greece. This will include, among others, an assessment on the progress with the post-programme commitments as attached to the June 2018 Eurogroup statement and the implementation of the medium-term debt measures.

Regarding the Banking Union, the Eurogroup remains fully committed to monitoring financial stability issues and to prepare international meetings when appropriate. The hearings of the Chair of the Supervisory Board of the ECB and the reporting by the Chair of the Single Resolution Board will continue to provide an excellent opportunity for discussions, including on their work and priorities. The Eurogroup will also carry on its role in the preparation of the Euro Summit meetings as needed.

Finally, we stand ready to work further on all different dimensions of EMU deepening and implement any decisions of the December 2018 euro summit on these matters.

The Eurogroup work programme should be seen as indicative. Sufficient flexibility is key in order to ensure swift reactions to future and unexpected developments.

I. Detailed work programme

21 January 2019

- 2018 euro area recommendations
- (poss.) EMU – follow-up to the December Euro Summit
- (poss.) International role of the euro

11 February 2019

- (poss.) Ireland Post Programme Surveillance – 10^{th} review
- (poss.) Portugal Post Programme Surveillance – 9^{th} review
- (poss.) Deepening of the EMU

11 March 2019

- (poss.) Thematic discussion on growth and jobs – Housing markets
- (poss.) Greece: 2^{nd} enhanced surveillance report
- (poss.) Preparation of the March European Council - Euro Summit

5 April 2019

- (poss.) Follow-up to the March European Council - Euro Summit
- (poss.) Preparation of international meetings: inflation and exchange rate developments
- Banking Union – euro area aspects
    - Ninth hearing of the Chair of the Supervisory Board, including on the ECB Annual Report on supervisory activities
    - Reporting on the activities of the Single Resolution Board
- (Poss.) Exchange of views with the Chair of the European Parliament's Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee

16 May 2019

- (poss.) Spain Post Programme Surveillance – 10th review
- (poss.) Deepening of the EMU

13 June 2019

- (poss.) Thematic discussion on growth and jobs – Inequality
- (poss.) IMF Article IV review of the euro area
- Economic situation in the euro area – Commission spring forecast
- (poss.) Cyprus Post Programme Surveillance – 6th review
- (poss.) Greece: 3rd enhanced surveillance report
- (poss.) preparation June European Council - Euro Summit
- (poss.) G7 debrief from Ministerial meeting
- Eurogroup work programme for II/2019